

[SAMPLE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION]

Dear Parent /Guardian and Staff,

This letter is to inform you about an outbreak of **chickenpox** (also known as varicella) at (school). The first case of chickenpox was identified on (date) and new cases are occurring. Chickenpox is usually not a serious illness, but it can be severe when complicated by bacterial skin infections and is **especially serious for children and adults with compromised immune systems** (for example, from cancer chemotherapy, high dose steroid therapy for asthma, or HIV). Complications from chickenpox are also more common in adolescents and adults, the elderly, and pregnant women.

Please monitor your child for symptoms of chickenpox (see accompanying fact sheet), and keep him or her out of school if you think he or she may have chickenpox. If you or your child has never had chickenpox disease, immunization is the best way to reduce the risk of infection. Immunization **or** a history of chickenpox disease is now a requirement for kindergarten and 6th grade entry.

- Children 12 months of age and older, adolescents, and adults who **have not had chickenpox disease and have not received chickenpox vaccine** should contact their health care provider to get immunized as soon as possible. Those with compromised immune systems should talk to their healthcare provider to discuss the best ways to protect themselves from chickenpox.
- **Students at (school) who have not had chickenpox disease and have received only one dose of chickenpox vaccine should receive a second dose as soon as possible to help control this outbreak.** For children 12 months to 12 years old, the 2nd dose must be at least 3 months after the 1st dose; for adolescents and adults 13 years and older, the doses must be separated by at least 4 weeks. This is in accordance with recommendations for chickenpox outbreak control from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (A panel of national experts recently recommended that children of all ages routinely receive 2 doses of chickenpox vaccine, but this is not yet part of the regular immunization schedule). **Bring this letter to your health care provider** to remind him or her that **during an outbreak**, varicella vaccine through the Vaccines For Children program may be used for the second dose and is reimbursable.
- Children and adults who have had chickenpox in the past do not need immunization.

For more information, please refer to the chickenpox information on the back of this letter. If you have any further questions you may call your or your child's health care provider, call Public Health at (206) 296-4774, or visit our website at www.metrokc.gov/health/prevcont/chickenpox.htm.

Sincerely,